



LA MISIÓN

The mission of Michael & April Floyd
Theological Education for the Dominican Republic

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Checking the compass

How to describe where we are now, as we move into the third year of our missionary assignment? A recent experience is telling. It concerns Lazarus's Basket, our weekly distribution of food to the needy, about which I have written in previous newsletters. To stretch our funds to serve more people, we have begun to buy food in bulk and at wholesale at a nondescript market stall in a barrio called Villa Juana. Angel, a member of the English congregation who knows Santo Domingo like the back of his hand, usually goes there with me. I drive and he guides me through the maze of crowded streets, then handles the bargaining when we arrive.

During the last week of September, when it came time to make our October purchases, Angel called to tell me that he couldn't go with me. Much to my surprise, I didn't panic. I couldn't remember exactly how to get there, but now that I have some idea of the city's overall layout, our previous trips had given me a pretty good fix on the approximate location. I figured that this could guide me, like a pointing compass needle, through the labyrinth of Villa Juana. And sure enough, I arrived without getting very lost. This gave me such self-confidence that I didn't hesitate to start bargaining, and before I knew it, I was fully involved in the give-and-take. I only got the seller to lower the price of the rice by half a peso per pound, but given my previously lackluster history as a bargainer, I considered this quite a victory.

This little episode is emblematic of where we stand in relation to our ministries here in the church, the seminary and the pre-school. We don't yet know all the ins and outs, but we now have a close-enough grasp of the overall situation to be able to navigate, negotiate and accomplish the work at hand. Going into our third year here, we approach the tasks of our ministries with more confidence in our ability to do what is appropriate for our Dominican setting. We can still be blind-sided by cultural differences



Getting the job done for Lazarus's Basket.

ences, but if this happens we at least have a context in which we can learn from it.

Thus we have started the new academic year with a fresh sense of eagerness and gratitude to God for our call to serve here. The seminary has seven entering students, four of whom are pursuing the regular degree program and three of whom are special students of various sorts. For the first time, I am also teaching on Saturdays in the deacons' training program, in which another seven students are enrolled. All in all, I'm teaching three Old Testament courses. I also continue to serve as interim associate vicar of the Church of the Epiphany until early next year, when the Bishop has indicated that he hopes to name a new vicar.

Meanwhile, the five students we graduated last year have set off on various roads in the Dominican Republic and El Salvador, with compasses of their own, to spread the Good News. So the grand adventure goes on and it feels good to be part of it.

Peace, Michael

April's 2 bits

I continue to work with the youngest, children, the 1 1/2 and 2 year olds, at our pre-school and day care center, Ovejitas de la Epifanía. It has grown—from 12 kids in 1 room the first year, to 24 in 2 rooms the second year, and now 38 in 3 rooms. We transformed the first floor of the sexton's house into a new classroom for the older kids, since the last two sextons haven't needed the space. There is no obvious place to expand if we want to grow, but there seems to be a need, so we will try to find a way.

In other news, our sexton José Abreu entered seminary this fall, so we have a new one, Jean Marc Vetinel. His first week on the job, someone walked in and in broad daylight stole the church's motor scooter, which the sexton had used for errands. This was the latest in a series of robberies the

church has suffered, so we hired another young man, Remy Adelson, to monitor the gate, so that we can keep it locked most of the time.

Without the motor scooter, our car has become the main means of transportation for church errands. This gives rise to déjà vu moments, flashes back to the time when our three children were living at home and all had their driver's licenses—five drivers sharing two cars.

Sometimes we need to go somewhere but someone else is using the car and can't get back in time because of the horrible traffic jams. The good news is that being late is mostly considered normal. We're getting used to it. I don't know if a new motor scooter is in the budget. You can't insure a motor scooter against theft here—the insurance companies would go broke!

Un abrazo, April



A Dominican Voice

Part of a community of faith:

Luis García, a first-year seminarian, is one of Michael's students.



I was born in San Francisco de Macorís in 1987. My parents died when I was five and my grandparents adopted me and saw to my education. That included three years of high school at the Seminario Menor San Francisco de Asis, where my sense of vocation for ordained ministry developed.

My grandmother was a devout Roman Catholic. She used to go to mass every day at six a.m. and sometimes I'd go with her. As a child, I was an acolyte at the Cathedral of Santa Ana. Those were important parts of my life and I wanted to be a monk, until later when I felt called to a ministry with day-to-day contact with the community. In any case, my grandmother raised me to be a man of prayer, convinced that Christ is the way to truth and life.

Doing fieldwork during my fourth year of high school, I got to know the Episcopal Church in my hometown, through two priests who treated me like a son. I helped by working with the youth of the church and doing whatever else was needed.

It was there that I found the community I had been dreaming of, working with my brothers and sisters in Christ to build the kingdom of God, so that others, like me, could experience a Christian life filled with the master's love. That community became my family, and Fr. Hipólito became my father. I have a place now in a community of faith, and my joy at being part of the Anglican Communion grows daily.

After God, the most important things to me are my

home church, Iglesia Jesús Nazareno, and my family—Father Hipólito Fernández, his wife, and their children. My goals in life are to be a better Christian every day, to become a priest and to live my life in response to God's call. I also want to marry, have a family and be a good father and husband.

I remember my past, I live the present, and I see my future as striving for the crown.

May God bless you with the knowledge of his word and the presence of his spirit. Those are the wishes of your faithful servant, Luís Alberto García. †

THANK YOU!

Your gifts make Michael and April's mission work possible. As Chair of their Sponsoring Committee, I join them in thanking the following people for gifts and pledges made since the summer 2009 newsletter.

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A special appeal

Dear friends of TEFDOR,

I recently attended a CREDO conference in Quito, Ecuador for Episcopal clergy from this region. As some of you know, CREDO is an opportunity for personal reassessment, with intensive reflection on health, finances and spirituality, as well as vocation. Participants emerge with an action plan for the renewal of their life and ministry.

As my colleagues talked about their life situations, I became acutely aware that because of the typically low salaries, many of them are living on the financial brink. Quite a few reported owing too much and included debt management in their action plans. I want to share one particular case with you.

One of the Dominican clergy is in a very tight financial situation, largely for reasons beyond his control. As things now stand, his family cannot pay his daughter's university tuition for the next two semesters – \$500 per semester. April and I are appealing to you on behalf of our friends. If you would like to join us in helping them, please make a check out to Michael or April Floyd, write "tuition contribution" on the memo line, and send it to Theological Education for the Dominican Republic, c/o Jane Dryden Louis, 4100 Edwards Mt. Dr., Austin, TX 78731.

Thanks,
Michael

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